

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

MAY 87

Please complete and return the following questionnaire for our reference file on May Show artists.

FULL NAME: KURT A. WARNKE

PRESENT POSITION

PREPARATOR,
MINT MUSEUM OF ART
CHARLOTTE, N.C.

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: DEC. 25, 1948 CLEVELAND, OHIO

CATEGORY/PRIMARY MEDIA: PRINTMAKING

ART TRAINING (Schools, Scholarships, etc.):

BA THIEL COLLEGE ; GREENVILLE, PA.
MFA PENN STATE ; UNIVERSITY PARK, PA.

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN (include location and year):

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ; EL PASO '87
N.C. ARTISTS INVITATIONAL ; HICKORY MOA '86
YBOR NATIONAL PRINT EX. ; YBOR, FLA. '85
PORTRAIT OF THE SOUTH ; ROME '84

SOLD EXHIBIT ; CHARLOTTE N.C. '84
EDINBORO NATIONAL ; EDINBORO PA. '83
3RD SOUTHERN GRAPHICS INVITATIONAL ;
WASH. ; D.C. '83

COLLECTIONS THAT NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

GREENVILLE MUSEUM OF ART ; GREENVILLE SC.
NORTH CAROLINA PRINT & DRAWING SOCIETY
HUNTERDON ART CENTER ; N.J.
F.J. REYNOLDS CORP.

AWARDS:

NEW WORKS GRANT ; '87
SOUTHERN ARTS FEDERATION FELLOWSHIP ; '86
MUSEUM PURCHASE AWARD ; '80, '81

We would appreciate having a statement about your philosophy and work as an artist—either general or something specific about the piece(s) selected for this year's May Show to aid us in the preparation of gallery talks and in the release of publicity materials. For more space, use the back of this sheet.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED REVIEWS.

THE TWO WORKS IN THE MAY SHOW ARE HOMAGES TO MY
FATHERS PASSING IN 1984. THE SERIES WAS BEGUN IN 1986.

Made seductive by the force of charm

Time and again you will hear artists, visual artists as well as literary artists, insisting that their works be judged on their own merits apart from any considerations of the artist's life or personality. Of course, a work of art must stand on its own, but it is nonetheless true that knowledge of the artist often adds measurably to one's appreciation of the art. I was reminded of this recently when I drove up to Unity College to see a small exhibition of prints and drawings by Kurt Warnke.

Kurt Warnke teaches drawing and printmaking at Sacred Heart College in Belmont, North Carolina, and for the past four summers, he has been the gallery assistant at Maine Coast Artists in Rockport. I had met the artist on a number of occasions but had never seen his work. At Unity I was immediately struck by how like the man his prints were: handsome, clean-cut, easy-going, possessed of quiet strength.

The Unity show consisted of five pen, brush, and ink wash drawings and 14 intaglio prints, some with cutout or collaged elements. The drawings were nature studies illustrating properties of line, texture, form, and light as perceived in isolated tangles of fallen limbs, brush, and debris. They amounted to an academic sorting out of the dense chaos of nature. The prints, on the other hand, were much more elegant and formal, the best of them dealing with man-made rather than naturally occurring designs.

In *Bridge*, Warnke creates a positive-negative pairing of images by cutting a printed image apart and mounting upper and lower sections separately, completing each image with overprinting. In *Profiles* and *Whistling*, he plays again with cutouts and the twinning of imagery by using the formal outlines of a referee's whistle as the key element of design.

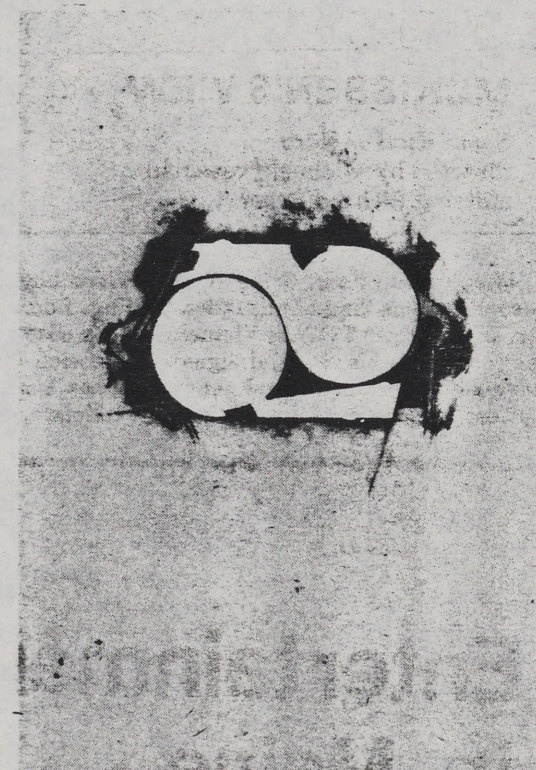
The most effective of Warnke's prints, however, amount to a kind of mechanical drawing infused with personality. *Packaged Plug I* and *Packaged Plug II* derive from a study of fishing lures in which the lines are fast and light, created by the toothed wheel of the

Packaged Plug I (left) and Whistling (right), intaglio prints by Kurt Warnke, mechanical drawings infused with personality.



printmaker's roulette. The quality of line in these prints is superb, subtle, and clean, trailing, tracery lines with such delicacy and such ease as to make one sigh at their rightness, their absolute self-assuredness.

This same softness of line characterizes *Rockport I*, *Rockport II*, and *Rudder*, three virtuoso prints in which the artist limns the lines of nautical architecture. Rarely have I seen an artist so successfully maintain the integrity of a drawing while not forsaking subject matter. You say to yourself, "This guy is just



drawing rudders and propellers," and yet he manages to extract a positive eroticism of form from so unlikely a source. Warnke's zippered, arching lines are nothing short of seductive, not by intent, but by force of charm. These are ingenuous prints, pure and simple.

Kurt Warnke's prints are not only effortless, belying the skill involved, but they are also exceedingly reasonable in price. Warnke's prints have an appealing modesty to them though I cannot think of a printmaker who has less to be modest about.

by Edgar Allen Beem

With Visual Techniques Artist Aligns Nautical Subjects

Kurt Warnke's work is deceptively simple.

The subject matter, composition and concerns of his prints, drawings and paintings seem so obvious. But the more you look at these works at the Hodges Taylor Gallery the more you see.

On one level, the exhibition forms a visual diary of summers spent in Maine. Nautical architecture fascinates Warnke, preparator of exhibitions at the Mint Museum of Art.

There is an interesting parallel between this nautical subject matter and visual techniques. The rudders and keels he depicts are what keep boats in trim and balance. In the same way, each of his carefully made intaglio prints is an exercise in visual balance.

Warnke fills the space with balanced tension, the pressure of ovals, circles and rectangles pressing against the edges. Each form seems at once arrested and about to spring into use.

Visual ambiguity forms another level of Warnke's work. It takes time to figure out these simple shapes. A print titled "Profiles," you realize after some study, presents the profile of a fishing lure and a policeman's whistle. "Islesboro" depicts a lollipop in a wrapper. Above it is a circle, a chair seen from above. "Birdhouse" shows a bathtub duck and a house trailer that looks like a bird, with a beaklike awning and window-like eye.

Yet another level of Warnke's work is in its sexual implications. These shapes rub against each other, push and pull, thrust and relax. "Rockport II," depicting a rudder, has the sensual sweep of Ingres's "Grande Odalisque." It looks like a stern end, all right, but not of a boat.

The only negatives in the show are two oil paintings. Warnke seems unable to translate the economy and tautness of his prints into a larger medium.

In "Trim Tab" the negative space, about one-third of the can-



Art
And Artists

**Richard
Maschal**

vas, defeats the composition, sapping energy from the straight line and bellying curve. "Waterline," a view of the rudder and stern of a boat, has a little bit of everything — hard-edge, geometric shapes, dribbled paint. Warnke seems to be searching for techniques that will click.

One day he may get the energy evident in the prints on canvas. They will be works worth seeing.

"Aspects of Contemporary American Realism," at the Jerald Melberg Gallery, is too little and too much. Not enough works are on view to give a proper survey of even aspects of realistic art. Yet the walls, crowded with works by 34 artists, are too full for comfortable viewing.

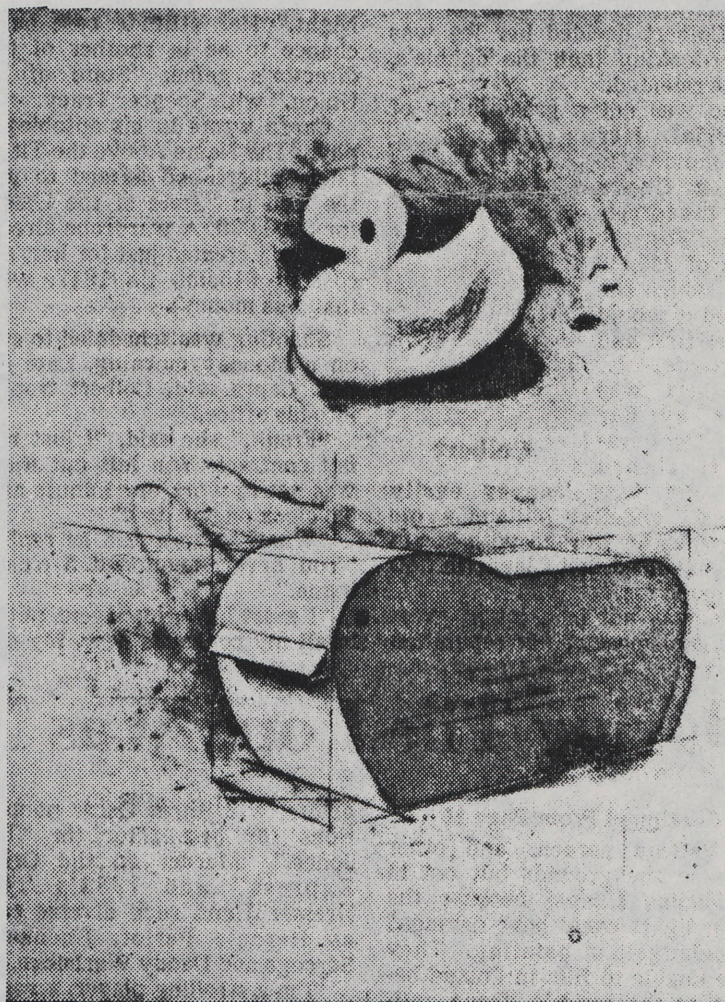
They range from the photo-realism of John Baeder's "City Diner" to the near abstraction of Joseph Raffael's "White Fish in Blue Water."

Several works stand out. The foliage in Richard Mayberry's "Meade Garden" is meticulously drawn. Daniel Chard's two small paintings, "Across South Jersey"

If You're Going

Kurt Warnke's works will be at Hodges Taylor Gallery, 227 N. Tryon St., through April 30. Prices are \$200-\$1,800. Gallery hours are 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Details: 334-3799 during those hours.

"Aspects of Contemporary American Realism" will be at the Jerald Melberg Gallery, 119 E. 7th St., through May 2. Prices are \$450-\$24,000. Gallery hours are 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Details: 333-8601 during those hours.



Detail of Kurt Warnke's 'Birdhouse'

and "Out Building," are virtuoso performances.

George Deem's "Italian Vermeer" is a delightful send up, with quotations from several

works and styles. On a wall hangs Caravaggio's "The Deposition." In the foreground is a luscious bowl of fruit taken from any number of Dutch still-life paintings.